

Interpretation

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The Book of Job

Translation and Commentary on Chapters 39 through 42

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CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

1 “Do you know when it is time for the mountain goat to drop?¹ and have you watched the hind writhing in the dance of birth?² **2** Can you number³ the months they fulfill? and do you know the season for them to deliver, **3** when they couch and split open⁴ to give birth to their young, and thus to end their travail? **4** Their children thrive and flourish in the wild. They come out and return unto her no more.⁵

5 “Who⁶ sent the wild ass⁷ off to be free?⁸ And who has untied the reins of the untamed jenny, **6** whose home I have made the wilderness, and who dwells off in the salt lands? **7** He laughs at the bustling of the city, and does not even hear the drivers shout,⁹ **8** but roams the hills as his pasture, and every green thing is his to search out.¹⁰

9 “Would the wild ox agree to serve you? Would he spend the night at your crib? **10** Can you hitch him up with a rope and hold him to the furrow? Will he plow up the valleys behind you? **11** Would you rely upon him? Remember, his strength is great. Could you leave him your toils? **12** Would you trust him to bring in the grain and gather it into the barn?¹¹

13 “An ostrich whimsically flaps her wings as if she had the pinions and plumage of a stork,¹² **14** but leaves her eggs on the ground for the dust to keep them warm. **15** She has forgotten that a foot can crush them, or that a wild beast might trample them down. **16** She treats her children roughly, as if they were not even hers. Her toils were all in vain. You see, she has no fear **17** because God has caused her to forget all wisdom, and she has no share in understanding. **18** She just flaps her wings as if on high, and laughs at a passing horse¹³ and its rider.¹⁴

19 “Did you give to the horse its strength, or clothe its neck with a mane? **20** Can you make him leap like a locust when the glory of his snort breeds terror? **21** He digs up the valleys, and exults in his strength as he goes out to meet armed combat. **22** He laughs at fear and is not dismayed, nor is he turned

The first thirty-eight chapters of the translation and commentary appeared in Volume 24, Numbers 2 and 3, and in Volume 25 of *Interpretation*.

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back by edge of sword. **23** A quiverful of arrows whizzes by—the flashing spear and the javelin. **24** With excitement and agitation, he gouges into the earth. He pays no homage to trumpet's blast, **25** but facing the trumpet he cries 'Huzzah'! He smells the battle from afar. Oh, the roars of the captains and the shoutings!¹⁵

26 "Is it by your wisdom that the hawk¹⁶ soars and spreads its wings out to the south? **27** Does the eagle mount at your command, building its nest on high? **28** He dwells upon the rock.¹⁷ He takes up his lodging on the highest pinnacle, making it his stronghold. **29** From there he searches out his prey. His eye spots it from afar, **30** and his fledglings swill down the blood. Whenever death defiles, he is there."¹⁸

Comments

1. Job has entered far into what we have come to call the Land of the Jackal. There he will meet six sets of wild beasts:

The rock-goat and hind

The wild ass and untamed jenny

The wild ox

The ostrich

The horse

The hawk and eagle

None of them is mythical, and each of them is either a close relative to a tame species or is itself a member of species of animals some of whom have been made tame, although in Hebrew they have totally different names. It is almost as if we were to learn what each would be when viewed from the other side. They remind us of that thin but absolute veil between the world of man and the world beyond man.

See notes to 39:18 and 26.

2. The single Hebrew word *hul*, which I have generally translated "writhe," and have here translated by the phrase "writhing in the dance of birth" is a very complex word. Indeed, much of our understanding of the Book of Job will center on our attempt to regain the sense of unity that lies within the complexity of this word.

As far as one can tell, it originally meant "to whirl."

Hos. 11:6 The sword shall "whirl down" against their cities, consume the bars of their gates, and devour them in their fortresses.

2Sam. 3:28 Afterward, when David heard of it, he said, "I and my kingdom are forever guiltless before the LORD for the blood of Abner the son of Ner. May it whirl down upon the head of Joab, and upon all his father's house."

It can also mean “to dance.” Sometimes it is used in a perfectly wonderful context which can be full of joy and exultation:

Psa. 149:3 Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with timbrel and lyre!

But more often than not things get out of hand, and often when first reading the word, the reader can feel a foreboding thought thickening the air.

Exod. 15:20 Then Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dancing.

Exod. 32:19 And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tables out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

The Book of Judges, that book which begins with such high hopes for self-rule, only to see them dashed, ends in fright and the clear need of the one thing the book had hoped to avoid, a king.

Judg. 21:20 And they commanded the Benjaminites, saying, “Go and lie in wait in the vineyards, and watch; if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance win the dances, then come out of the vineyards and seize each man his wife from the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin. And when their fathers or their brothers come to complain to us, we will say to them, Grant them graciously to us; because we did not take for each man of them his wife in battle, neither did you give them to them, else you would now be guilty. And the Benjaminites did so, and took their wives, according to their number, from the dancers whom they carried off; then they went and returned to their inheritance, and rebuilt the towns, and dwelt in them.

Then, too, it comes to mean “to tremble,” or “to quake”:

Psa. 29:8 The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness, the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

Deut. 2:25 This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the peoples that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you.

It often means “anguish” and “pain”:

Isa. 23:5 When the report comes to Egypt, they will be in anguish over the report about Tyre.

Jer. 51:29 The land trembles and writhes in pain, for the Lord's purposes

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against Babylon stand, to make the land of Babylon a desolation,
without inhabitant.

or even a mortal injury:

1Sam. 31:3. The battle pressed hard upon Saul, and the archers found him; and
he was badly wounded by the archers.

But, as in our case, it can also mean “to be in labor,” and hence “to give birth”:

Deu. 32:18 You were unmindful of the Rock that begot you, and you forgot
the God who gave you birth.
Ps. 37:6 He will bring forth your vindication as the light, and your right as
the noonday.
Ps. 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother
conceive me.
Prov. 25:23 The north wind brings forth rain; and a backbiting tongue, angry
looks.
Isa. 13:8 and they will be dismayed. Pangs and agony will seize them; they
will be in anguish like a woman in travail. They will look aghast at
one another; their faces will be aflame.

For this reason, the same word that meant “pain” and “anguish” can also mean “to prosper”:

Psa. 10:5 His ways prosper at all times; thy judgments are on high, out of his
sight; as for all his foes, he puffs at them.

We can now begin to understand the great admonition: “Gird your loins like a man (*geb_her*).” There is wildness and pain present when the signet is put to the clay to make a thing of value and worth. Here there is no indication that the pain of birth was caused by a curse or the result of having taken a bite of the apple. Job, in visiting the day of birth, was revisiting the day of his own birth. To venture beyond the realm of man and to see each thing as having its own signet means to come to terms with the unity of all these opposing feelings.

There is one more aspect of things we must look at:

Jer. 23:19 Behold, the storm of the LORD! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling
tempest; it will burst upon the head of the wicked.

Note the phrase “a whirling tempest.” If the words and ideas were intended by the author to come together as naturally as they do for the English-speaking reader who knows the word “whirlwind,” we may also recognize in this pas-

sage some foundation for the shift we had already begun to feel in the role of the feminine. It is the whirling, dancing, pain-ridden, birthing tempest that speaks to Job. She, for the Hebrew word for tempest is a feminine noun, lets Job see that pain and joy and birth are so interrelated that they cannot be distinguished in speech.

3. How different things are here from the Book of Isaiah:

Isa. 66:7 Before she was in labor she gave birth; before her pain came upon
 her she was delivered of a son.

If God is a nurturing god rather than a constructing god, fostering in each being life according to its own signet, number and season as well as pleasure and pain are an integral part of the way in which things come to be what they are, and are what they are. This, then, is the question to Job: Can he discern number and order in this untrodden land?

4. In using such a harsh word, the Voice is beginning to open Job to a different kind of order. From the point of view of human justice there is no a priori reason why birth should entail so much pain, and in terms of human justice it seems all wrong. Here, perhaps for the first time, we can begin to see a world beyond our world, an order with its own necessities which seems to be totally indifferent to our sense of order. Yet we can all see that without such a world, the joys of our world could never come to be.

5. The Voice here reminds Job that in its own way, the separation of birth is as hard and as final as the separation of death, and that our understanding of the one may lead us in coming to terms with the other.

6. The question is, of course, rhetorical, since, unlike the donkey and the burro, the wild ass has never known either burden or rein.

7. The wild ass had been mentioned several times in the text before. Job already had some care for it:

Job 6:5 Will the wild ass bray when there is grass?

Eliphaz had none:

Job 11:12 Hollow man will become thoughtful when the wild ass gives birth to
 a man ('adam).

But even Job, while he showed a certain amount of compassion, did not quite have the respect that these lines demand:

Job 24:5 They are wild asses in the desert, going off about their labors of
 snatching up at dawn.

8. To understand this passage, it would be best to begin by seeing how the word is used in other Biblical contexts:

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- Exod. 21:2 When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing. . . . But if the slave plainly says, "I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free. . . ." When a man strikes the eye of his slave, male or female, and destroys it, he shall let the slave go free for the eye's sake.
- Deut. 15:12 If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you.
- 1Sam. 17:25 And the men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel; and the man who kills him, the king will enrich with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel."
- Isa. 58:6 "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?"
- Jer. 34:9 that every one should set free his Hebrew slaves, male and female, so that no one should enslave a Jew, his brother. . . . At the end of six years each of you must set free the fellow Hebrew who has been sold to you and has served you six years; you must set him free from your service. But your fathers did not listen to me or incline their ears to me. but then you turned around and profaned my name when each of you took back his male and female slaves, whom you had set free according to their desire, and you brought them into subjection to be your slaves.

9. Job himself had once said nearly the same thing:

- Job 3:18–19 There prisoners are wholly at ease for they do not even hear the driver's voice. Small and great, all are there, and the slave is free of his lord.

And there are other passages, too, that show his concern.

- Job 7:2 Like a slave he yearns for the shadows, and like a hireling he waits for his wages.

It is true that, since the language does not distinguish between "slave" and "servant," Job, along with many others, did have a slave or servant:

- Job 19:16 I called to my servant, but he gave no answer, and now must I curry to him for favor.

They were servants or slaves, that was true, but they were treated justly and with kindness:

Job 31:13–14 If ever I felt contempt for the cause of one of my servants, man or maid when they brought complaint against me, what would I do when God rose up?

10. Even from within the human sphere, men could always see that slavery was unpleasant, both for oneself and for others. There were always some men who were deeply moved by the pain and suffering it caused, and many of them devoted their lives to alleviating that suffering. But the discovery of the notion that slavery is wrong as such, regardless of whether there is pain and suffering involved or not, requires a certain admiration for the wild ass. To put it otherwise, it requires something like the concept of a signet. It is through seeing the wild ass as having a life of its own, roaming the hills as his pasture, that its freedom becomes important to us. That is not to say that such ideas cannot find their way back into the human world but, as we shall see, it will be a long journey.

11. The answer is No. Job can do none of these things, and yet he did have an ox, five hundred of them, and he did “hitch them up and hold them to the furrow.” But to “trust them to bring in the grain” would, of course have been out of the question. Human art is only the vaguest image of the world farm.

This is the only verse, with the exception of 39:24, in which God speaks of “trust.” It is in noticeable contrast to what Eliphaz had said:

Job 4:18–19 If He put no trust in His servants and to His angels lays charge of folly, what of those who dwell in a house of clay, whose foundation is but dust?

or

Job 15:15 He puts no trust in His Holy Ones and even the heavens are not clean in His sight.

Because each thing is what it is beyond the sphere of man, each thing can be trusted to be what it is. Job sees a world in which all things are trusted rather than watched. The world farm, chaotic as it may seem, has kept itself in balance in unrecorded time, giving it a legitimate claim to be much older than Bildad’s “first generations.” The signets, or nature, the way each thing is when left to itself, is prior to either the arts or to tradition.

12. It is not certain what bird is meant, but here is what is known:

Lev. 11:13 And these you shall have in abomination among the birds, they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, the osprey, . . . the stork, the heron according to its kind, the hoopoe, and the bat.

Ps. 104:16 The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly, the cedars of

Lebanon which he planted. In them the birds build their nests; the stork has her home in the fir trees.

Jer. 8:7 Even the stork in the heavens knows her times; and the turtledove, swallow, and crane keep the time of their coming; but my people know not the ordinance of the LORD.

Zech. 5:9 Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, two women coming forward! The wind was in their wings; they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah between earth and heaven.

It is probable that the author intended a double irony, since the name of this bird means something like "piety" or "loving care."

13. Part of the irony of this passage is that ostriches, insofar as they have been domesticated, have been ridden by some tribesmen of the area as if they were horses.

14. For Job this must have been the most difficult of the beasts to meet thus far; at least it is the most fearful to write about.

Who can help being totally charmed by the foolish antics of this silly, silly beast. Yet at the same time we are horrified and know that if she were a fellow-citizen our judgment would have to be quite otherwise and we would have to arraign her for child abuse. Our worlds are beginning to pull apart and to clash as they have for Job since we first met him.

15. The first thing to be said of these verses is that the Hebrew text is as moving as any words ever spoken on the field at Agincourt. The first questions to be asked, then, are why the human soul should find itself so moved by the savage, subhuman might of a beast that could mean to it nothing other than its own destruction and why the author should wish to arouse in Job an admiration for such a beast. Does this not mean raising the very passions in Job that Elihu, if only in part, foresaw when he warned Job not to leave his warm den of hibernation?

It would seem that there are not one, but two obscure and sometimes interweaving pathways which lure men like Job toward the chinks in the Great Wall of the Human City and that reveal its problematic character. Both the highest and the lowest in man have a certain kinship with the lands that lie beyond that wall. If Job is to return safely to the home of man, he must learn to feel and to recognize all sides of the human character that each may find its proper place.

16. The hawk, too, had been domesticated. There is an early bas relief from Khorsabad showing a falconer bearing a hawk on his wrist.

17. The imagery is not uncommon in the Bible, but the significance has greatly changed:

Isa. 33:15 He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, who despises the gain of oppression, who shakes his hands, lest they hold a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes from looking upon evil, he will dwell on the heights; his place of defense

will be the fortresses of rocks; his bread will be given him, his water will be sure.

Jer. 48:28 Leave the cities, and dwell in the rock, O inhabitants of Moab! Be like the dove that nests in the sides of the mouth of a gorge.

Jer. 49:16 The horror you inspire has deceived you, and the pride of your heart, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, who hold the height of the hill. Though you make your nest as high as the eagle's, I will bring you down from there, says the LORD.

Obad. 1:3 The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, whose dwelling is high, who say in your heart, "Who will bring me down to the ground?" Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, thence I will bring you down, says the LORD.

18. The sixth beast, the hawk, is not so charming as his sister bird the ostrich. Job, as we shall see in the next chapter, has been defeated. Elihu's implicit claim that no man is enough of a man (*geb_her*) to face the world of nature seems to be vindicated. The sight of the blood and the gore have numbed him. The cold and longterm planning that led up to the carnage made it the more grotesque. We do not, however, know whether Job was so horrified because he did not see, or precisely because he did see that the hawk, in returning to life a life about to flow off into death, did for its children all that the charm of the ostrich was unable to do.

CHAPTER FORTY

1 And the LORD answered Job and said: **2** "Should a man of discipline wrangle with the Almighty? One who would convict God must give an answer."

3 Then Job answered the LORD and said: **4** "I have become so weak. How can I answer You? I lay my hand upon my mouth. **5** I have spoken once, but I have no answer; twice, but I cannot continue."¹

6 And the LORD answered Job out of the Tempest and said: **7** "Gird up your loins like a man (*geb_her*)²: I will question you, and you must let me know. **8** Would you shatter my judgment? Would you condemn me in order that you might be right? **9** Have you an arm like God's, and can you thunder in a voice such as His?"³

10 "Go ahead, deck yourself out in majesty and dignity. Put on glory and splendor. **11** Let fly the outbursts of your anger. Look upon every man of majestic pride and abase him. **12** Look upon everyone of majestic pride and bring him low and tread down the guilty. **13** Bury them all in the dust. Bind their faces in obscurity. **14** Then even I would praise you, for your own right hand would have saved you."⁴

15 “But look now, here is Behemoth⁵ whom I made along with you. He eats fodder just like the cattle, **16** but just look at the strength in his loins. His might is in the muscles of his belly. **17** He can stretch out his tail stiff as a cedar. The sinews of his thighs are all knit together. **18** His bones are ducts of brass, and his limbs are like rods of iron.⁶ **19** He is the first of God’s ways.⁷ Only his Maker can approach him with a sword.

20 “The mountains yield him produce, and all the beasts of the field come there to play.⁸ **21** He lies down under the lotuses, hiding in the reeds and the fen. **22** The lotuses blanket him with their shade and the willows of the brook surround him. **23** Though the river rage,⁹ he is unalarmed, confident that the Jordan will burst into his mouth. **24** Can he be taken by the eyes? or pierced in the nose with a snare?¹⁰

25 “Can¹¹ you haul in the Leviathan¹² with a fishhook? Can you press down his tongue with the line? **26** Can you put a ring through his nose, or pierce his jaw with a barb? **27** Will he always be coming to implore you, or speak to you softly? **28** Will he make a covenant with you to be your eternal servant?¹³

29 “Can you play with him like a bird or tie him on a string for your young ladies?¹⁴ **30** Or can the dealers get hold of him and trade their shares in the market? **31** Can you fill his hide with harpoons, or his head with fishing spears? **32** Merely place your hand upon his head, and you will remember war no more.”¹⁵

Comments

1. Job has no answer. He has been numbed as if stung by the Socratic sting ray fish. Once Job thought that he knew what justice was, but he did not. Now he neither knows nor believes that he knows. The sight of the six beasts has convinced him that Elihu was right, and that his warning was just. The world beyond man is no place for a man. Job has been converted from the Brother of the Jackal to one who would “call out to the muck ‘Thou art my Father’ and call out ‘Mother’ and ‘Sister’ to the maggots.”

2. If Job’s recantation had been what God had wanted, He has it right here at this point. There would have been no need to continue. But the Tempest will not let Job go. Again it says, “gird up your loins like a man (*gebher*)”; and again his teaching is not a “telling,” but an “asking.”

3. God’s argument is, I believe, somewhat more specific than one might at first take it to be. “Have you an arm like God’s, and can you thunder in a voice such as His?” God seems to base His argument on His power, but Job had always recognized God’s greater power. Indeed, that was always the problem:

Job 9:19 If trial be by strength, He is the mighty one, and if by court of law,
who would plead my case?

When Job thought that he knew what justice was, he also thought that he had the means to establish that justice. In the last two chapters, however, it has become clear that Job's understanding of justice was defective in that he had not realized that an adequate attempt to address the problem of human justice requires that one journey beyond the sphere of human justice to face the problem of what one might wish to call cosmic justice. The next two chapters will deal with the question of the administration of that justice.

4. Appropriately enough, God is joking. These do not turn out to be the means by which justice is established in the cosmos, and Job has yet much to learn of the spirit behind the administration of that justice. Job's search for human justice has led him into a world in which human action no longer seems relevant. Its vast forces are so wide sweeping that no decking would ever be seen and no outburst of his anger ever be felt, and it will take Job a time to see the implications of that kind of justice as it expresses itself within the sphere of human action.

5. The word *b^ehemot^h* is the normal plural of the feminine noun *b^ehemah*, which means any large domesticated animal such as a cow or an ox. We have already seen it in Job:

Job 12:7	Just ask the beasts and they will show you;
Job 18:3	Why are we considered beasts and made unclean in your eyes?
Job 35:10–11	none say "Where is God my maker, . . . who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth;

The verbs, however are all in the masculine singular.

6. "Behemoth whom I made along with you . . . eats fodder just like the cattle." It is a normal part of the greater world around us, being neither miraculous nor mythical. It is, however, clearly of mythic proportion. "His bones are ducts of brass, and his limbs are like rods of iron." The visible universe is much larger than any man knows and contains creatures which man did not name and of which he is unaware. Man is not the unquestioned center of all that is visible.

7. Compare

Ps. 111:10	The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who practice it. His praise endures for ever!
Prov. 1:7	The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.
Prov. 4:7	The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.
Prov. 8:12	I, wisdom, dwell in prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion. . . . The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old.

8. or "laugh"

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9. 'As^haq is usually translated as “oppress.” It occurs rather frequently in the Bible and with the exception of this verse only, always implies injustice of the gravest kind.

Job 10:13 Does it seem good to You that You oppress, that You have contempt for the toil of your own hand?

Lev. 19:13 You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning.

10. The half-mythic, half-real fabric of this account succeeds in leaving the reader feeling that he shares a world with a living being of monumental stature whom he has never seen. This grand beast is at ease in the land of the Jackal. He finds room for the pounding, tyrannizing river, making it his drinking fountain. He is passively ferocious yet actively gentle and seems to rule by laughter.

Thus, we must now begin a rather long and, I fear, somewhat boring footnote on the subject of “laughter” and “play.” I believe that the subject plays a role in the Book of Job which differs from its role in the other books of the Bible, with the possible exception of the Book of Proverbs. There is, however, no way of seeing that other than looking at each usage, verse by verse. I shall limit our inquiry to the words *shq* and *shq*, since words like *l'g* essentially mean “mocking” or “derision.”

It must be remembered that we are only speaking of “laughter.” Joy and happiness are another matter.

The first person in the Bible to laugh was Abraham:

Gen. 17:17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, “Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?”

But from the next verses it becomes clear that it was not a contented laughter:

Gen. 17:18 And Abraham said to God, “O that Ishmael might live in thy sight!” God said, “No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.

Sarah’s laughter came next:

Gen. 18:12 So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?”

But had her laughter been goodnatured, she would have felt no need to deny that she had laughed.

Gen. 18:13 The LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, and say, ‘Shall I Indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ Is anything too hard

for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall have a son.” But Sarah denied, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid. He said, “No, but you did laugh.”

Then came the taunting laughter of the sons-in-law of Lot:

Gen. 19:14 So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, “Up, get out of this place; for the LORD is about to destroy the city.” But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting.

Sarah:

Gen. 21:6 And Sarah said, “God has made a laughingstock of me; every one who hears will laugh at me.”

Next there came Ishmael:

Gen. 21:9 But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac.

It is hard to have any idea of what Ishmael was actually doing, but certainly the consequences were disastrous.

Foolish Isaac’s innocent play also betrayed him.

Gen. 26:8 When he had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out of a window and saw Isaac joking with Rebekah his wife.

The next two occurrences of the word are usually even translated by the word “insult”:

Gen. 39:14 she called to the men of her household and said to them, “See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to insult us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice;

Gen. 39:17 and she told him the same story, saying, “The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to insult me;

Then came the golden calf:

Exod. 32:6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. And the LORD said to Moses, “Go down; for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves;

Next

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Judg. 16:25 And when their hearts were merry, they said, “Call Samson, that he may make sport for us.” So they called Samson out of the prison, and he made sport before them. They made him stand between the pillars;

Next came laughter and a tune that led to a revolution:

1Sam. 18:7 And the women sang to one another as they made merry, “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.”

Joab and Abner play rough:

2Sam. 2:14 And Abner said to Joab, “Let the young men arise and play before us.” And Joab said, “Let them arise.” Then they arose and passed over by number, twelve for Benjamin and Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David. And each caught his opponent by the head, and thrust his sword in his opponent’s side; so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called Helkathazzurim, which is at Gibeon.

There is no question but that Uzzah’s punishment which stemmed from the next laughter was too great.

2Sam. 6:5 And David and all the house of Israel were making merry before the LORD with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there because he put forth his hand to the ark; and he died there beside the ark of God.

The same might even be said for Michal:

2Sam. 6:21 And David said to Michal, “It was before the LORD, who chose me above your father, and above all his house, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the LORD—and I will make merry before the LORD. I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in your eyes; but by the maids of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honor.”

Then come mocking and scorning

2Chron. 30:10 So the couriers went from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun; but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them.

Even the good laughing at the bad is not the same as goodnatured laughter:

- Ps. 2:4 He who sits in the heavens laughs; the LORD has them in derision.
Ps. 37:13 but the LORD laughs at the wicked, for he sees that his day is
 coming.
Ps. 52:5–6 But God will break you down for ever; he will snatch and tear you
 from your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living. Selah.
 The righteous shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him, saying,
Ps. 59:8 But thou, O LORD, dost laugh at them; thou dost hold all the
 nations in derision.

Peppered throughout the quotations from the Book of Proverbs, however, one finds another strain. There only do we find something closer to what we find in the Book of Job.

- Prov. 1:26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic strikes
 you,
Prov. 8:12 I, wisdom, dwell in prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion.
 . then I was beside him, like a master workman; and I was daily
 his delight, rejoicing before him always,
Prov. 8:31 rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the sons of men.
Prov. 10:23 It is like sport to a fool to do wrong, but wise conduct is pleasure
 to a man of understanding.
Prov. 14:13 Even in laughter the heart is sad, and the end of joy is grief.
Prov. 26:18 Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the
 man who deceives his neighbor and says, "I am only joking!"
Prov. 29:9 If a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and
 laughs, and there is no quiet.
Prov. 31:10 A good wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.
 . . . Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time
 to come.

Ecclesiastes also has a rather dim view of laughter.

- Eccles. 2:2 I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?"
Eccles. 3:4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time
 to dance;
Eccles. 7:3 Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of countenance the
 heart is made glad.
Eccles. 7:6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of
 the fools; this also is vanity.
Eccles. 10:19 Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life, and money
 answers everything.

Jeremiah is not quite the same. He too rejects the "laughter" of his day:

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Jer. 15:17 I did not sit in the company of merry-makers, nor did I rejoice; I sat alone, because thy hand was upon me, for thou hadst filled me with indignation.

Jer. 48:26 "Make him drunk, because he magnified himself against the LORD; so that Moab shall wallow in his vomit, and he too shall be held in derision. Was not Israel a derision to you? Was he found among thieves, that whenever you spoke of him you wagged your head?

Jer. 48:39 How it is broken! How they wail! How Moab has turned his back in shame! So Moab has become a derision and a horror to all that are round about him.

and feels mocked

Jer. 20:7 O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived; thou art stronger than I, and thou hast prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all the day; every one mocks me.

But he also has another notion of laughter.

Jer. 30:17 For I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal, says the LORD, because they have called you an outcast: 'It is Zion, for whom no one cares!' Thus says the LORD: Behold, I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob, and have compassion on his dwellings; the city shall be rebuilt upon its mound, and the palace shall stand where it used to be. Out of them shall come songs of thanksgiving, and the voices of those who make merry. I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will make them honored, and they shall not be small.

It is reserved for another time and is not a way of meeting what is before us, however.

There are also such thoughts to be found elsewhere:

Ps. 126:1 A Song of Ascents. When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."

Zech. 8:4 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.

Outside of the Book of Job there are only a handful left. They read as follows:

Lam. 1:7 Jerusalem remembers in the days of her affliction and bitterness all the precious things that were hers from days of old. When her

people fell into the hands of the foe, and there was none to help her, the foe gloated over her, mocking at her downfall.

Lam. 3:14 I have become the joke to all the peoples, the burden of their songs all day long.

Ezek. 23:32 Thus says the Lord GOD: “You shall drink your sister’s cup which is deep and large; you shall be laughed at and held in derision, for it contains much;

Hab. 1:10 At kings they scoff, and of rulers they make sport. They laugh at every fortress, for they heap up earth and take it. Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god!

It might be noted in passing that the six references to laughter in the New Testament also imply only scoffing (cf. Mat. 9:24, Mark 5:40, Luke 6:21, 25, 8:53, James 4:9).

The first to speak of laughter in the Book of Job is Eliphaz:

Job 5:21–23 When tongues scourge, you will be secure and shall have no FEAR of violence when it comes; but at violence and starvation you will laugh. Have no FEAR of the beasts of the earth, for you have a covenant with the rocks in the field, and the beasts of the fields will bring you peace.

His laughter is rooted in the safety of a “covenant” he will have “with the rocks and the beasts of the fields” but is not so different from laughter we have known before.

Job the outcast, also knew the grim side of laughter

Job 12:4 But now I have become a joke to my friends, one who would ‘Call on God and have him answer’—a joke, a simple, innocent joke!

Job 30:1 But now they have turned me into the joke, those younger than I whose fathers I would have felt contempt to put with my sheep dogs.

But there was another side of laughter, a side which had always been a part of Job and, if we are to judge by the many quotations given above, made him different from the others, even before all his trouble, and perhaps even before his real thought had started:

Job 29:24 I joked with them a bit so that my kindness would not overwhelm them because they had no self-confidence.

The subject was bound to come up, because one cannot fail to notice how much play and innocent laughter there is in the Tempest:

Job 39:7–8 He laughs at the clamor of the city, and does not even hear the drivers shout, but roams the hills as his pasture, and every green thing is his to search out.

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- Job 39:18 She just flaps her wings on high, and laughs at a passing horse and its rider.
- Job 39:22 He laughs at fear and is not dismayed, nor is he turned back by edge of sword.
- Job 40:20 The mountains yield him produce, and all the beasts come there to play.
- Job 40:29 Can you play with him like a bird or tie him on a string for your young ladies?
- Job 41:21 He laughs to the sound of the javelin.

With Job, laughter ceases to be a thing hidden away for a better time or a luxury indulged in by those who are mindless of the times. It is a way of living with the times: “I joked with them a bit so that my kindness would not overwhelm them because they had no self-confidence.”

It is hard not to feel that there isn’t some connection between Job’s new understanding of laughter and his discovery of the signets. At first, this relation sees a bit strange. Identity—really being what one is—seems to be more a subject of tragedy than of comedy. “It is I, Hamlet, the Dane.” It is in comedy that people seem more plastic, continually changing their clothing, their identity, and even their sex. Imagine Oedipus being mistaken for a long-lost twin brother. Yet it is Lear who asks: “Who is it that can tell me who I am? Lear’s shadow”; and why must Hamlet insist upon things which can so be taken for granted by Rosalind, who knows full well who she is even while she is being Ganymede playing Rosalind?

11. Some English translations start Chapter Forty-one at this point.

12. See note to 3:8

13. Job has come, and he has seen, but he has not come to be the conquerer of nature. Eliphaz once had a dream:

- Job 5:22 . . . but at violence and starvation you will laugh. Have no FEAR of the beasts of the earth, for you have a covenant with the rocks in the field, and the beasts of the fields will bring you peace.

but it was not the right dream: “Will he make a covenant with you to be your eternal slave?”

To put it more succinctly, Job has come to learn from nature, but not to conquer it. To that extent, he has come to have its ways impressed upon him rather than impressing his ways upon it, and one of the things he learned, as we have seen from the ostrich, is the importance of freedom as it follows from an understanding of the signets. On this question, compare:

- Gen. 1:26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every

creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

It should be noted that both words, “subdue” and “dominate,” are quite definite and strong:

Lev. 25:46 You may bequeath them to your sons after you, to inherit as a possession for ever; you may make slaves of them, but over your brethren the people of Israel you shall not take dominion, one over another, with harshness.

In addition, the word for “subdue” also has a sense of completion and finality.

Josh. 18:1 Then the whole congregation of the people of Israel assembled at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there; the land lay subdued before them.

Jer. 34:11 But afterward they turned around and took back the male and female slaves they had set free, and subdued them as slaves.

14. The world beyond man is not a world in which man can play; it is only a world in which he can learn about play. The charm of the sentence teaches us about innocent jesting, but the beyond is not ours. We cannot divide it up and use it as we will. To see it is to see it as a thing for itself, not as a thing for us.

15. In many ways this verse reminds one of the famous passage from Isaiah:

Isa. 2:1 The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

But it is not the same. There is no promise of a great day to come one day that Job must wait for in expectation, but an act he must perform now.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

1 “Thus, [all] expectation¹ is an illusion.² Do men not reel at the sight of him? 2 No one is so brutal³ as to rouse him up. Now, who is that one who would stand before me? 3 Who confronts me and [demands that] I give exact restitution?⁴ Is not everything under the heavens mine?⁵

4 ”I will not be silent about him, or his exploits or the grace of his frame. 5 Who can unveil his outer garment, or come before his double-folded jaw? 6 Who can open the doors⁶ of his face—his teeth surrounded by terror! 7 But his pride is the strength of his shields⁷, closed⁸ up by a tight⁹ seal,¹⁰ 8 each touching the next, and not a breath between them. 9 Each one clings¹¹ to his brother. They clutch¹² each other and cannot be parted.

10 “Lights flash at his sneeze. His eyes are like the cracking of dawn. 11 Out of his mouth comes a flaming torch as sparks of fire escape. 12 From his nostrils there comes smoke as from a stream or boiling cauldron. 13 His breath ignites the coals and flames come out of his mouth. 14 His strength resides in his neck, and terror dances before him. 15 Festoons of flesh, fused all together, lie on him cast as metal and do not quaver.¹³ 16 His heart is cast hard as stone, cast as a nether millstone.

17 “When he rises up, the gods are in dread. They shatter and are in confusion. 18 No sword that will reach can stand, nor spear, nor javelin, nor lance. 19 Iron he counts as straw, and bronze as rotten wood. 20 No son of the bow can put him to flight. Slingstones turn to stubble 21 and clubs are rated as straw. He laughs to the sound of the javelin.¹⁴

22 “His underparts are jagged shards. He sprawls himself out implacable on the mud¹⁵ 23 and makes the deep to seethe like a cauldron. He makes the sea his ointment¹⁶ pot¹⁷ 24 and leaves a shining wake till the abyss seems all hoary-headed. 25 No one of the dust will have dominion over him, for he was made to be without dread.¹⁸ 26 He sees every towering thing. He is king over all the sons of pride.”¹⁹

Comments

1. *tohalto* is from the root *yhl* (wait in expectation). Even the reader not much versed in Hebrew, or so I believe, can see that *yhl* is a near relative of the root *hwl* or *hyl*, which was discussed in the note to Job 39:1. It too, could, at times, mean “to wait,” but carried along with it a sense of dread, whereas this word implies hope or expectation.

It might also be of some use to the reader to consider how the root is used in the Book of Job:

Job 6:11 What strength have I, that I should wait in expectations? What is my end that I should prolong my life?

- Job 13:15 It may be that He will slay me. I have no higher expectations. None the less I will defend my ways before Him.
- Job 14:14 If a man (*geb_her*) dies, will he come back to life again? All the days of my service I have waited in expectation for my release to come.
- Job 29:21 Men would hear me and wait in expectation, falling silent to hear my counsel.
- Job 29:23 They waited for me in expectation as for the rain; their mouths opened wide as if to catch the spring rain.
- Job 30:26 I hoped for the good but there came evil; I waited in expectation for the light, but there came only a murk.
- Job 32:11 I have waited in expectation for your words and listened for your understanding while you searched for something to say.
- Job 32:16 I waited in expectation till they had finished speaking, till they stood and could no longer reply.

2. We have heard those expectations:

- Isa. 27:1 On that day, the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish the Leviathan the flying serpent, and the Leviathan the crooked serpent: and He shall slay the crocodile that is in the sea.
- Ps. 74:14 You crushed the head of the Leviathan and gave it to the people of the island as food.
- Job 3:8 Those who despise the sea, and those who are determined to lay open the Leviathan will curse it.

If abandoning “expectation” means primarily abandoning the expectation that the day will come the Leviathan will be crushed in favor of the alternative account of the Leviathan:

- Ps. 104:26 There go the ships, the Leviathan whom you made to play with. They serve You and You give them their food in due time.
- Job 40:29 Can you play with him like a bird or tie him on a string for your young ladies?

then perhaps we can gain a deeper insight into the interplay between *hwl* and *yh_l*. The Voice has introduced us to the first while denying us the second. The first has replaced the second. That is to say, that it is by giving up the *yh_l* and recognizing that the world beyond man and its denizens have a legitimate being for themselves, apart from their being for us, that we begin to see our own legitimate being as it is implied in the notion of the *hwl*.

Since the abandonment of expectation, *YaChaL*, insofar as it deals with our relation to the world beyond man, need not imply the abandonment of hope *QaWah*, which deals with our relation to the world of man, it might be wise to remind ourselves of Job’s hopes as well:

- Job 6:8–9 Who will see to it that my request comes to light; that God grant my hopes? Would that God were pleased to crush me, loose his hand and cut me off!

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Job 14:18–22 A mountain has fallen and crumbled away, a rock dislodged from its place. The waters have worn the stones away and its torrents have washed away the dust of the land. So, You have trashed all mortal hope. You have overpowered man, and he has resigned. You mangled his face and sent him off. His sons were honored but he never knew of it. They were in disgrace, but he was unaware. His body surrounds him with pain, and his spirit is eaten away.

Job 17:13–15 If I must take the Pit to be my home, and spread out my couch in darkness; call out to the muck ‘Thou art my Father’ and call out ‘Mother’ and ‘Sister’ to the maggots, where then is my hope?

3. Job has passed through that veil which separates the human from the nonhuman. His journey had begun some time ago. He first felt it in the form of fear:

Job 30:29 and so I became a brother to the Jackal and friend to the ostrich.

But the forces pulling him back into the land of the Jackal had, in fact, already begun. Back in Verse 21 of that same chapter, Job had said:

Job 30:21–22 You have turned brutal and with the might of Your hand You persecute me. You hoist me up onto the wind and set me astride to be tossed about in the wreckage.

The word ‘*ak^hzar*, which I have translated as “brutal,” is not a very common word, and it occurs only twice outside the Book of Job. One of them reads:

Lam. 4:3 Even the jackals give the breast and suckle their young, but the daughter of my people has become brutal, like the ostriches in the wilderness.

The word “brutal” seems, then, to imply the attempt or desire to be or become an actor within the realm beyond the human. But to see that “[all] expectation is an illusion,” is to see a world which man may admire, and in which he may first learn to recognize a world as a world for itself, apart from the needs of man. But that knowledge can only lead one to say: “No one is so brutal as to rouse him up.”

4. The root of this word, *s^hlm*, means “to be whole or complete.” From it comes the Hebrew word for “peace.”

Neh. 6:15 So the wall was finished (*s^hlm*) on the twenty-fifth day the month Elul, within fifty-two days.

Then the word comes to mean “to pay [a debt]”:

2Kings 4:7 She came and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts and you and your sons can live on the rest."

where the word for debt is related to a word meaning "to lift."

To pay a debt, then, is to "make whole," or "to fill in" what one has "lifted off."

This understanding is fundamental to human justice:

Exod. 21:36 Or if it is known that the ox has been accustomed to gore in the past, and its owner has not kept it in, he shall pay ox for ox, and the dead beast shall be his.

The goal of this kind of justice is to make those who have suffered whole again. To the extent that one must speak of punishment, one charged with a crime is punished for what harm he has caused others. This is human justice as it is contained in the notion of *s^hlm*. If, however, winnowing is the prime analogy of cosmic justice, then punishment for cosmic crimes can only be punished in terms of the harm man has caused to himself. In that sense, it does not strictly make sense to "demand exact restitution."

5. "Is not everything under the heavens mine?" Cosmic justice is larger than human justice. It leaves room for the Leviathan and insures that there will always be grass even "where no man is." But its justice is of a winnowing kind.

6. In the note to Job 31:34 we saw the importance of Job's openness as embodied in his "open door." But Leviathan is finally closed to man. We can know him from the outside only.

7. *m^eganim*, from the root *mgn*, "to defend," normally means "to shield." Here it is taken by all to mean his scales. In either case, it means that the Leviathan, unlike Job, does have the kind of impenetrable skin the Satan spoke of. He cannot be disturbed by others. He cannot be hurt by others. No one can touch him. Therefore he cannot learn from others and so cannot learn to know himself.

8. The remainder of this chapter is clearly quite dense, and I am not sure that I can be of much assistance either to the reader or to myself. It might help, however, to begin by looking to see how the word *sgr* ("closed") is used in the rest of the text:

Job 3:9-10 May it not see the eyelid of dawn open, for it closed not the doors of my mother's belly but hid my eyes from toil.

Job 11:10 If He should pass by and separate or close up, who can turn Him back?

Job 12:14 and what He tears down can never be rebuilt. He closes in on a man and nothing is ever reopened.

Job 16:11 God sets the wicked to close in on me and casts me into the hands of guilty men.

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One cannot help noticing that the Leviathan finds his strength in being closed up, while Job's strength lay in his willingness to stand in the open entranceway. Job leaves himself open to what is most other; the Leviathan does not. Job's openness first came to light when we saw that he had no "skin beneath his skin." This was the vulnerability that let in pain and anguish. But it also left him open to feeling and then seeing a world beyond his world. Job has seen the Leviathan, but has the Leviathan seen Job? His closedness would seem to say No.

9. "tight," *sar*. The Leviathan's pride turns out to be Job's old foe—narrowness. For Job it was the oppressive feeling of walls pulling in and sky cutting off. For the Leviathan it was his completion and perfection. For Job it was the beginning of murk and confusion.

10. "Seal," *hotam*—for Job, "signet." What gave anything its being by making it intelligible to another, has, for the Leviathan, become that which seals it away from all other beings, making it unknown and unintelligible to all others.

11. *dab^haq*, "stick." For us it is ugly, shameful, or constrictive:

Job 19:20 My bones stick (*dbq*) to my skin and to my flesh.

Job 31:7 If my step has wandered from the way, my heart gone after my
 eyes, or a taint stuck (*dbq*) to my hand,

At best, it restrains speech:

Job 29:10 The voice of the nobles was hushed, and their tongue stuck (*dbq*) to
 their palate,

For the world beyond man, it is another thing:

Job 38:38 to liquify the dust and cast it into congealed (*dbq*) clods?

and for the Leviathan it seems to be yet another.

Job 41:9 Each one clings (*dbq*) to his brother.

Job 41:15 Festoons of flesh, fused (*dbq*) all together, lie on him cast as metal
 and do not quaver.

12. *lqd*: It is important to see how very different this word looks to men:

Job 5:13 He traps the wise in their own craftiness as the advice of those
 contorted ones dashes headlong.

Job 36:8 But if they are bound in fetters and trapped in cords of affliction,

But, in the world beyond man, also consider:

Job 38:30 Water draws itself up, tight as stone, and the face of the deep
 clutches to itself.

Again, the list is complete.

13. Not so Job, who once said:

Job 6:12 Do I have flesh of bronze?

For man to be made of flesh is to be able to feel pain:

Job 19:22 Why do you pursue me like God, taking satisfaction out of my
flesh?

Not to feel pain is not to understand pain;

Job 10:4 Have You eyes of flesh?

For Job, it is through the feeling of pain that we come to understand the notion of importance, by seeing ourselves willing to risk pain and death for that which is important:

Job 13:14 For what reason do I take my flesh between my teeth and my life in
my hands?

The way his flesh lies makes it appear to be open to the other, but, like a flower carved in stone, the festoons of flesh cast like iron remain for ever, but forever in itself.

14. Nothing can be for him what it is for itself. Difference for him makes no difference. "Slingstones turn to stubble." His total unawareness and indifference to the world around him is awesome. The lights which flash at his sneeze he uses neither to see by nor to read by, and yet we are arrested and can see only him.

To see things as they are for themselves and not as they are for us, to appreciate the grass which grew where no man was, Job was forced to quit the world of man for a world unstifled by human need and let to be itself. But in that world only man, the stranger, through his weakness and otherness could learn to let things be. Only then could he return with a fuller understanding of human need.

15. Once an old Parmenides asked a young Socrates if he thought mud was anything in itself apart from what it is for us. The question would seem to be a bit absurd. Has mud anything better to do than to be made into a mud pie, or a brick, or a house? And we all stand upon the earth with never a thought of asking its permission. Nonetheless, we can almost feel the jagged shards cutting gashes into the ground. In this imagery we see the great destruction to others implied in his simple being.

16. Or "perfume"

Exod. 30:25 . . . and you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil
blended as by the perfumer; a holy anointing oil it shall be. . . .

Whoever compounds any like it or whoever puts any of it on an outsider shall be cut off from his people.

1Sam. 8:13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers.

Song of Sol. 5:13 His cheeks are like beds of spices, yielding fragrance. His lips are lilies, distilling liquid myrrh.

17.

38:8 Who closed up the sea behind the double door when first it burst out of the womb

The sea, long in our tale the measureless realm of chaos and confusion, which had always threatened to engulf all, has become a simple utensil, instrument of his innocent pleasure.

18. The word which I have translated as “dread” is a very obscure word, and in fact appears in only one other passage in the whole of Biblical literature. Ironically, the passage reads:

Gen. 9:2 Panic and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered.

But the Leviathan “was made to be without dread.” Thus, Job 41:25 emerges, and perhaps intentionally so, as a correction to Genesis 9:2. If the human sphere of understanding is to be of any ultimate relevance, man cannot be master of the visible universe. It is only in seeing a thing outside of himself as a being in itself, that man can begin to regard himself as a self.

19. *s^hah_{as}*. The exact meaning of this word is not very clear. It only appears in one other verse in the Bible. The context is:

Job 28:7–9 The eye of the falcon has never caught sight of it, nor have the sons of pride ever trampled it over. The lion can bear it no witness, but man has put his hand to the flint and overturned its mountains by the root.

In Aramaic, the word *s^hah_{sa}*’ means “a lion,” while in Ethiopian the root means “to be insolent.” In Arabic, the root means “to be elevated,” from which root comes the word *s^hh_{is}*, “a bulky man” or “a man of rank.”

Thus, there is disagreement among translators as to whether the Leviathan is king over beasts or over men. The ambiguity may not be totally unintentional, since it is not so clear that such a distinction is of any concern whatsoever to the Leviathan himself. It is not even clear that he knows that he is king, though king indeed he surely is.

This grand beast, above and beneath all malice or ambition, oblivious to all,

rules all by the mere weight of his being. In him we recognize our limitations and hence see our definition.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

1 Then Job answered the LORD and said: 2 “I know that You can do all and that no design¹ can be withheld from You. 3 Who is this one that hides counsel without knowledge? I have spoken though I had not understood. There is a world beyond me, a world full of wonders² that I had never known. 4 Now listen and I will speak; I shall question you, and you will inform me. 5 I had heard of You as ears can hear;³ but now my eyes have seen You. 6 Wherefore I have both contempt and compassion for⁴ dust and ashes.”⁵

7 And⁶ it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite,⁷ “My anger fumes against you, and against your two friends: for you have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as has my servant Job. 8 Therefore, get yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you; for I will bear⁸ his countenance in order not to deal with you after your folly, in that you have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job has.”

9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did according as the LORD commanded them, the LORD also bore up the countenance of Job.⁹

10 And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends, and the LORD returned all that Job had, twice over.

11 Then all of his brothers and sisters¹⁰ and all of his friends came over to his house and supped¹¹ with him. They consoled him and showed him compassion for all the evils which the LORD had brought upon him.¹² Each one gave a *Qesitah*¹³ and each a golden ring; 12 and the LORD blessed the last days of his life even more than He had its beginning. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand head of cattle, and one thousand she asses;¹⁴ 13 and he also had seven sons and three daughters.¹⁵ 14 The first he called by the name of Jamimah,¹⁶ the second Keziah,¹⁷ and the third Keren-Hapuch.¹⁸ 15 In all the land there could not to be found any woman more beautiful¹⁹ than Job’s daughters, and their father gave them an inheritance alongside their brothers.²⁰ 16 And Job lived another one hundred and forty years after these events, and knew his sons and his son’s sons, and theirs, four generations. 17 And so Job died, an old man contented with his days.

Comments

1. *m^ezimah*. It is terribly unclear how one should translate this word. Generally speaking it usually implies evil or wicked intent:

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Job 21:27 Oh, I know what you are thinking, the machination you have devised against me.

Ps. 10:2 In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor; let them be caught in the schemes which they have devised.

In the Book of Proverbs, however, it often means something more like “discretion”:

Prov. 8:12 I, wisdom, dwell in prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion.

Jeremiah, on the other hand, uses it to describe God’s plans against the wicked:

Jer. 30:24 The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his mind. In the latter days you will understand this.

The verb in question, *yib^haser*, only occurs in the passive in one other passage in the Bible:

Gen. 11:6 And the LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing that they propose to do can be withheld from them.”

The verb, then, would seem to preclude taking the word *mzmh* either in the sense one finds in Proverbs or in Jeremiah, since in neither case is anything being spoken of which one would want to prevent.

This leaves the first meaning, but that is also difficult to accept. Perhaps Job means, however, that that too can be accepted as long as it is known to be without malice or intent.

2. “There is a world beyond me, a world full of wonders,” literally, “[There are] wonders beyond me.”

3. Literally, “I had heard of You by rumor of the ear,” cf. 28:22.

4. *‘al ken ‘em’as w^enihamti ‘al ‘e^pher w^e’p^har*. This is clearly a critical and contested passage. I also think that it has been much abused.

King James translates: “Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent on dust and ashes.” The Revised Standard does about the same, except that King James at least puts the word “myself” in italics, indicating that there is nothing corresponding to it in the Hebrew text. Greenberg has “Therefore, I recant and relent, being but dust and ashes.” Greenberg is more in line with the original punctuation which puts the major stop after the second verb rather than the first as the King James would require.

The Cambridge Bible translates: “Therefore I melt away; I repent in dust and ashes.” Their reasoning is somewhat complicated. The root *m’s* had already

occurred in Job 7:5: “My skin has become hard and begins to ooze,” where it meant “to ooze.” It is also found in Ps. 58:8, “Let them be like the snail which dissolves into slime.” These passages, together with the fact that the roots *mss* and *nms* do mean “to melt,” seem to be behind their understanding of the verse.

The root *m*’s fundamentally means “to despise” or “reject.” It is, for instance, the feeling that God has when people offer Him sacrifices that have no real meaning to them. Again, to translate it as “recant,” as Greenberg does, would require something like a “myself” to be understood in the text, and there seems to be no basis for such an assumption.

The root *nhm* means “to feel deep sorrow or compassion.” Like the English word, if one feels sorrow for something that one has done, one feels remorse, guilt, and repentance. But to feel sorrow or compassion for the suffering of others does not, in itself, imply anything like guilt or self-recrimination.

’al; the word normally does mean “on” or “upon.” When King James translates “on dust and ashes,” one assumes that they mean “while sitting on dust and ashes,” but, so far as I have been able to tell, the inference which is so clear in English vernacular is by no means as automatic in Hebrew.

’al is exactly the word that one would expect to find following *w^enihamti*, however, and together they simply mean “I feel compassion for.”

As far as the word *’em’as* is concerned, normally one would have expected *em’as ’eth* or *’em’as ’el*, “I have contempt for . . .” but it would not be so strange to let the *’al* do for both.

’ep^her w^ep^har, “Dust and ashes,” is, of course, a common Biblical phrase meaning mankind in all its mortality.

Job 30:19 It throws me into the mire and I become like dust and ashes.

Also see

Gen. 18:27 Abraham answered, “Behold, I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes.”

5. Job the homeless is at home now. He is at home in a very large world in which no man counts for more than a hill of beans. He is also at home in a very small world in which each man is of infinite value. He can be at home in each world only because he is at home in the other. He also knows that that large and woolly world has in it a kind of love and a kind of laughter which only he and his fellows can establish in the world of the small.

6. Linguistically speaking, we have returned to Chapter One, back to the everyday language of *Dick and Jane*. This return by an author who knows the names of Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar is, by the way, one more reason for believing that the book was conceived of as a whole, and that the linguistic flight from and back to the mundane was a integral part of the author’s intention.

7. Again there has been a switch in the texture of the language. Gone is the tortuous syntax of the long middle section with its obscure vocabulary. The language is simple, but it is not a simple return to a fairytale world. All of that has been replaced by the language of ordinary everyday adult human speech.

8. Remember Aaron.

9. Job's eyes have seen, but that seeing took place in a foreign land in which his hands could not act, Job of the wide world is again Job the servant of the LORD, living in a nutshell. He who has seen the Leviathan will say a prayer for his friends as they bring their bulls and their rams to be sacrificed. The world of seeing turned out to be a world devoid of all meaningful human action, and Job has returned.

10.

Job 1:4 His sons used to make feasts in their homes, each one on a different day, and send word to their three sisters to come and eat and drink with them.

It might be worth mentioning that the only other Biblical character to use the phrase "brothers and sisters," with all the sense of equality that it implies, was that wonderful woman of the night, Rahab:

Joshua 2:13 . . . and save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.

11. The word *'aChal* that had so often meant death, destruction, and resignation now holds together a world that can act and interact:

Job 5:5 All he has harvested the hungry shall devour even taking out from under the thorns: and the thirsty shall go panting after their wealth.

Job 6:6 Can what is tasteless be eaten without salt or does the slime of an egg white have any taste?

Job 13:28 and all becomes worn out like a rotten thing—like a piece of clothing that the moths have eaten.

Job 15:34 . . . the tents of bribery are a consuming fire.

Job 18:13 His skin will be eaten away; death's first born will consume his members.

Job 20:26 He will be consumed by an unblown fire and all shall go ill with the remnant left in his tent.

Job 21:25–26 Another dies in the bitterness of his soul, never having eaten of goodness, yet together they lie in the dust, and the worms cover them over.

Job 22:20 saying, "Has not our enemy been destroyed, their remains consumed by fire?"

Job 31:8 then let me sow, but another eat

- Job 31:12 It would be a fire consuming down to Abaddon, uprooting all that I have ever accomplished.
- Job 31:16–17 How could I withhold pleasures from the poor or drain a widow's eye, or even eat a crust of bread alone, not sharing it with the fatherless, when they had grown up with me for a father?
- Job 31:39 claims that I have eaten its produce without payment and snuffed out the life of its owners,
- Job 40:15–16 But look now, here is Behemoth whom I made along with you. He eats fodder just like the cattle, but look at the strength in his loins. His might is in the muscles of his belly.

Now, at the end of the book, after Job's return, eating can lose its destructive character and become an act of simple joyous unity.

12.

- Job 2:11 Now when Job's three friends had heard of all the evils that had come upon him, they came each from his own place—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamatite. They conferred with one another and planned to come together to console him and to show him compassion.

What was not possible before has now become actual. The recognition of compassion that Job gained from beyond the human sphere has had its full effect within the human sphere.

13.

- Gen. 33:19 And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, he bought for a hundred *Qesitoth* the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent.
- Joshua 24:32 The bones of Joseph which the people of Israel brought up from Egypt were buried at Shechem, in the portion of ground which Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred *Qesitoth*; it became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph.

14.

- Job 1:3 He owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, ten thousand head of cattle, five hundred she asses and was the head of a very large estate. He was the richest man (*'ish*) in the East

15. We remember:

- Job 1:18–19 While he was yet talking, another one came in and said; "Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in the house of their oldest brother, when a mighty wind came in from the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house. It fell down on

the young people. They are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell thee.”

Nor have they been forgotten:

Job 42:11 Then all of his brothers and sisters and all of his friends came over to his house and supped with him. They consoled him and showed him compassion for all the evils which the LORD had brought upon him.

The Book of Job does not end with a *deus ex machina* or miracle or resurrection. In recognizing the being of all the things that are, including the being of death itself, Job himself becomes a self.

16. It is from the word *yom*, or “day.” It is a new Job. We remember his words to his friends:

Job 3:1 Then, Job opened his mouth and spurned his day.

17. *q^usi’a*, in English, “cassia,” is a fragrant bark of a tree that can be powdered like cinnamon and used in cooking.

Ps. 45:8 Your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia. From your ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad;

18. *keren happuk^h*: the first two names are clearly intended to be very beautiful. Then, too, the very fact that the daughters are mentioned by name gives them a certain being and hence a certain nobility. But what of this name?

The second word, *puk^h* means “antimony”:

1Chron 29:2 So I have provided for the house of my God, so far as I was able, the gold for the things of gold, the silver for the things of silver, and the bronze for the things of bronze, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, besides great quantities of onyx and stones for setting, antimony, colored stones, all sorts of precious stones, and marble.

In ancient times it was ground into a powder, also called *puk^h*, and used by women as eye makeup. As such it became, in the pens of the prophets, symbolic of feminine corruption:

2Kings 9:30 When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her eyes, and adorned her head, and looked out of the window.

Jer. 4:30 And you, O desolate one, what do you mean that you dress in scarlet, that you deck yourself with ornaments of gold, that you enlarge your eyes with paint?

Now let us look at the first word, *qeren*. It means “horn,” and together the name means “the Horn of Mascara,” but *qeren* means so much more than “horn.”

A horn contained the oil used to anoint the kings of Israel:

1Sam. 16:1 The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul, seeing I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.”

1Sam. 16:13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

1Kings 1:39 There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent, and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, “Long live King Solomon!”

But, to begin at the beginning, the word means the horn of a living animal:

Deut. 33:17 His firstling bull has majesty, and his horns are the horns of a wild ox; with them he shall push the peoples, all of them, to the ends of the earth; such are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and such are the thousands of Manasseh.

But the root also means “to shine”:

Exod. 34:30 And when Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. The people of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone; and Moses would put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

and hence, the word itself can mean “a ray of light”;

Hab. 3:4 His brightness was like the light, rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power.

The horns of an animal are his strength and his defense. They give him greater stature and a formidable look:

1Sam. 2:10 The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

And so it comes to mean all these things for a human being:

1Sam. 2:1 Hannah also prayed and said, “My heart exults in the LORD; my horn exalted in the LORD. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in thy salvation.

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- Ps. 75:4 I say to the boastful, “Do not boast,” and to the wicked, “Do not lift up your horn;”
- Ps. 89:17 For thou art the glory of their strength; by thy favor our horn is exalted.

This is what Job had in mind when he said:

- Job 16:15 I have sewed sackcloth over my skin. I have driven my horns into the dust.

Often the Psalmist will bring these meanings together:

- Ps. 132:17 There I will make a horn to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed.
- Ps. 148:14 He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his saints, for the people of Israel who are near to him. Praise the LORD!

As I once before had occasion to mention, the horn played a central role in the place of worship:

- Exod. 27:2 And you shall make horns for it on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it, and you shall overlay it with bronze.
- Exod. 29:12 and shall take part of the blood of the bull and put it upon the horns of the altar with your finger, and the rest of the blood you shall pour out at the base of the altar.
- 1Kings 2:28 When the news came to Joab—for Joab had supported Adonijah although he had not supported Absalom—Joab fled to the tent of the LORD and caught hold of the horns of the altar.

And, of course, it was the source of all kinds of music:

- Joshua 6:5 And when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, as soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up every man straight before him.
- 1Chron. 15:28 So all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, to the sound of the horn, trumpets, and cymbals, and made loud music on harps and lyres.

Linguistically, too, the phrase “horn of mascara” works well, because it easily blends into the language along with such other phrases as “horn of oil” and “the horn of my salvation”:

- 2Sam. 22:3 My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; thou savest me from violence.

To put the argument simply, by conjoining the word *queren* (“horn”) to the word *puk^h* in such a natural and ordinary way, the author has silently but forcefully robbed the word of its sting. Its bare mention is no longer sufficient to conjure up a degrading image of womankind.

19. As is the case in the dialogues of Plato, there is a *prima facie* assumption that the beautiful is also good. That statement is by no means intended to imply that Plato was unaware of the problematic character of that assumption: only think of such people as Meno and Alcibiades.

The Biblical view of beauty is also complicated and, so as to not mislead ourselves, we shall have to consider the full list. We have not, however, included The Song of Songs, since it is a subject in itself which would have to be understood on its own terms.

The subject first arises with respect to Sarai. From the beginning we are shown the difficulties involved:

Gen. 12:11 When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, “I know that you are a woman beautiful to behold; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife’; then they will kill me, but they will let you live. . . . And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house. . . . But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram’s wife.

And ultimately, her beauty almost led to the death of an innocent, though perhaps somewhat naive man.

Gen. 20:2 And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, “Behold, you are a dead man, because of the woman whom you have taken; for she is a man’s wife.” Now Abimelech had not approached her; so he said, “Lord, wilt thou slay an innocent people?

Although it is clear that as a young man, Jacob preferred Rachel’s beauty to Leah’s soft eyes:

Gen. 29:16 Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah’s eyes were soft, but Rachel was beautiful and lovely. Jacob loved Rachel; and he said, “I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel,”

But it is not clear what the reader is to think.

Leah knows only gratitude each time she has a child:

Gen. 29:31 When the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she

called his name Reuben; for she said, “Because the LORD has looked upon my affliction; surely now my husband will love me.” She conceived again and bore a son, and said, “Because the LORD has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also”; and she called his name Simon.

But Rachel always thinks in terms of battle and victory:

Gen. 30:1 When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister; and she said to Jacob, “Give me children, or I shall die!”

Gen. 30:6 Then Rachel said, “God has judged me, and has also heard my voice and given me a son”; therefore she called his name Dan. Then Rachel said, “With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed”; so she called his name Naphtali.

When she finally does have a son of her own, she reacts not with gratitude, but with a demand for another:

Gen. 30:24 and she called his name Joseph, saying, “May the LORD add to me another son!”

Her demand was met, but at a very heavy price:

Gen. 35:16 Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel travailed, and she had hard labor. And when she was in her hard labor, the midwife said to her, “Fear not; for now you will have another son.” And as her soul was departing (for she died), she called his name Benoni; but his father called his name Benjamin. So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).

Nor is it clear what we are to think of her charm:

Gen. 31:32 “Any one with whom you find your gods shall not live. In the presence of our kinsmen point out what I have that is yours, and take it.” Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them. So Laban went into Jacob’s tent, and into Leah’s tent, and into the tent of the two maidservants, but he did not find them. And he went out of Leah’s tent, and entered Rachel’s. Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them in the camel’s saddle, and sat upon them. Laban felt all about the tent, but did not find them. And she said to her father, “Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the way of women is upon me.” So he searched, but did not find the household gods.

But perhaps most telling of all is the ultimate superiority of Leah's soft-spoken son Judah over that master magician, Joseph, whom we saw at work in the note to Job 6:11.

Joseph himself was beautiful, but again it led to grave problems.

Gen. 39:6 So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge; and having him he had no concern for anything but the food which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome (beautiful) and good-looking. And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph, and said, "Lie with me."

Then come the pointless cows:

Gen. 41:2 and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows beautiful and fat, and they fed in the reed grass. . . . And the thin and gaunt cows ate up the first seven fat cows,

On the other hand beauty as a fictional goal is at times implicitly praised:

Num. 35:33 You shall not thus pollute the land in which you live; for blood pollutes the land, and no expiation [beautification] can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of him who shed it.

There is a law:

Deut. 21:11 and see among the captives a beautiful woman, and you have desire for her and would take her for yourself as wife,

but it must be read in the light of Cozbi.

David was beautiful:

1Sam. 16:12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he."

1Sam. 17:42 And when the Philistine looked, and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, ruddy and beautiful in appearance.

He was charming, and not to allow oneself to fall under the sway of that charm is to miss a great deal of the Bible. Nonetheless, one cannot totally forget his relation to Bath Shibah.

There was also Abigail:

1Sam. 25:3 Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. The woman was of good understanding and beautiful, but the man was churlish and ill-behaved; he was a Calebite.

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Tamar was a wonderful person, but her beauty caused her disaster:

2Sam. 13:1 Now Absalom, David's son, had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar; and after a time Amnon, David's son, loved her. . . . So Amnon lay down, and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Pray let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand."

But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." But he would not listen to her; and being stronger than she, he forced her, and lay with her.

Her brother was not so wonderful, but beauty did him in as well:

2Sam. 14:25 Now in all Israel there was no one so much to be praised for his beauty as Absalom; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. . . . And when he cut the hair of his head (for at the end of every year he used to cut it; when it was heavy on him, he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head, two hundred shekels by the king's weight. . . . And Absalom chanced to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding upon his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak, and his head caught fast in the oak, and he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on.

2Sam. 18:10 And a certain man saw it, and told Joab, "Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak. . . . On the other hand, if I had dealt treacherously against his life (and there is nothing hidden from the king), then you yourself would have stood aloof." Joab said, "I will not waste time like this with you." And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them into the heart of Absalom, while he was still alive in the oak. And ten young men, Joab's armor-bearers, surrounded Absalom and struck him, and killed him.

For the sake of completeness I shall add the rest of the story, though I do not understand its importance:

2Sam. 14:27 There were born to Absalom three sons, and one daughter whose name was Tamar; she was a beautiful woman.

Next came poor Abishag:

1Kings 1:3 So they sought for a beautiful maiden throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king. The maiden was very beautiful; and she became the king's nurse and ministered to him; but the king knew her not.

Vashti's beauty did not help her, and there is little reason to believe she deserved her fate:

Esther 1:11 to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown, in order to show the peoples and the princes her beauty; for she was fair to behold.

Esther's beauty saved her people,

Esther 2:7 He had brought up Hadassah, that is Esther, the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father nor mother; the maiden was beautiful and lovely, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai adopted her as his own daughter.

but it is not clear what kind of a person she has become by the end of the book. The rest speak one way or the other for themselves:

Ps. 45:2 You are the most beautiful of the sons of men; grace is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you for ever.

Ps. 48:2 beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King.

Prov. 6:25 Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes;

Prov. 31:30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

Eccles. 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

Eccles. 5:18 Behold, what I have seen to be good and to be beautiful is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life which God has given him, for this is his lot.

Isa. 3:24 Instead of perfume there will be rotteness; and instead of a girdle, a rope; and instead of well-set hair, baldness; and instead of a rich robe, a girding of sackcloth; instead of beauty, shame.

Isa. 33:17 Your eyes will see the king in his beauty; they will behold a land that stretches afar.

Jer. 4:30 And you, O desolate one, what do you mean that you dress in scarlet, that you beautify yourself with ornaments of gold, that you enlarge your eyes with paint? In vain you beautify yourself. Your lovers despise you; they seek your life.

Jer. 10:3 for the customs of the peoples are false. A tree from the forest is cut down, and worked with an axe by the hands of a craftsman. Men beautify it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move.

Jer. 11:15 What right has my beloved in my house, when she has done vile

deeds? Can vows and sacrificial flesh avert your doom? Can you then exult? The LORD once called you, "A green olive tree, beautiful with goodly fruit"; but with the roar of a great tempest he will set fire to it, and its branches will be consumed.

Lam. 2:15 All who pass along the way clap their hands at you; they hiss and wag their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem; "Is this the city which was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth?"

Ezek. 16:13 Thus you were made beautiful with gold and silver; and your raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and embroidered cloth; you ate fine flour and honey and oil. You grew exceedingly beautiful, and came to regal estate. And your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the splendor which I had bestowed upon you, says the Lord GOD. "But you trusted in your beauty, and played the harlot because of your renown, and lavished your harlotries on any passer-by . . . at the head of every street you built your lofty place and prostituted your beauty, offering yourself to any passer-by, and multiplying your harlotry."

Ezek. 27:4 Your borders are in the heart of the seas; your builders made perfect your beauty. . . . The men of Arvad and Helech were upon your walls round about, and men of Gamad were in your towers; they hung their shields upon your walls round about; they made perfect your beauty.

Ezek. 28:15 You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord GOD: "You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty . . . Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I exposed you before kings, to feast their eyes on you."

Ezek. 31:7 It was beautiful in its greatness, in the length of its branches; for its roots went down to abundant waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it, nor the fir trees equal its boughs; the plane trees were as nothing compared with its branches; no tree in the garden of God was like it in beauty. I made it beautiful in the mass of its branches, and all the trees of Eden envied it, that were in the garden of God. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because it towered high and set its top among the clouds, and its heart was proud of its height, I will give it into the hand of a mighty one of the nations; he shall surely deal with it as its wickedness deserves, I have cast it out.

Ezek. 33:32 And, lo, you are to them like one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, for they hear what you say, but they will not do it.

Amos 8:13 that day the beautiful virgins and the young men shall faint for thirst.

Zech. 9:15 The LORD of hosts will protect them, and they shall devour and

tread down the slingers; and they shall drink their blood like wine, and be full like a bowl, drenched like the corners of the altar. On that day the LORD their God will save them for they are the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land. Yea, how good and how fair it shall be! Grain shall make the young men flourish, and new wine the maidens.

20. Perhaps the best way of understanding the significance of what has occurred is to compare it to the case of the daughters of Zelophehad:

Num. 26:33 Now Zelophehad the son of Hepher had no sons, but daughters: and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

Num. 27:1 Then drew near the daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hepher, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, from the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph. The names of his daughters were: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the leaders and all the congregation, at the door of the tent of meeting, saying, Our father died in the wilderness; he was not among the company of those who gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah, but died for his own sin; and he had no sons.

The first thing to note is that the daughters of Zelophehad received an inheritance only because their father had no son. Had there been a son, the daughters would not have received an inheritance, but only a dowry.

The text continues:

Num. 27:4a Why should the name of our father be taken away from his family,

The main argument here concerns the preservation of the name of the father, whereas in the Book of Job the inheritance is purely for the sake of the daughters.

Thus, the next phrase

Num. 27:4b Give to us a possession alongside our father's brothers.

cannot convey the same sense of equality that one feels so strongly in the verse

Job 42:15b and their father gave them an inheritance alongside their brothers.

It should also be noted that it was Job's own decision to change his will, given what he had seen in the Tempest:

Num. 27:5 Moses brought their case before the LORD. And the LORD said to Moses, "The daughters of Zelophelad are right; you shall give them

possession of an inheritance among their father's brothers and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them. And you shall say to the people of Israel, 'If a man dies, and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter. And if he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. . . '

In the case of Zelophehad, however, there was a further complication:

Num. 36:1 The heads of the fathers' houses of the families of the sons of Gilead the son of Machir, son of Manasseh, of the fathers' houses of the sons of Joseph, came near and spoke before Moses and before the leaders, the heads of the fathers' houses of the people of Israel; they said, "The LORD commanded my lord to give the land for inheritance by lot to the people of Israel; and my lord was commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother to his daughters. But if they are married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the people of Israel then their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and added to the inheritance of the tribe to which they belong; so it will be taken away from the lot of our inheritance. And when the jubilee of the people of Israel comes, then their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe to which they belong; and their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers." And Moses commanded the people of Israel according to the word of the LORD, saying, "The tribe of the sons of Joseph is right, This is what the LORD commands concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, *'Let them marry whom they think best; only, they shall marry within the family of the tribe of their father. The inheritance of the people of Israel shall not be transferred from one tribe to another; for every one of the people of Israel shall cleave to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. And every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the people of Israel shall be wife to one of the family of the tribe of her father, so that every one of the people of Israel may possess the inheritance of his fathers. So no inheritance shall be transferred from one tribe to another; for each of the tribes of the people of Israel shall cleave to its own inheritance.'*" The daughters of Zelophehad did as the LORD commanded Moses; *for Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married to sons of their father's brothers. These are the commandments and the ordinances which the LORD commanded by Moses to the people of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho.*

Although the words "Let them marry whom they think best" clearly show genuine concern for the welfare of the women, tribal inheritance is paramount. Husbands are immediately found for the women from their own tribe, and the inheritance turns out to be little more than a grand dowry.

In the case of Job's daughters, however, nothing is said about husbands or dowries. The inheritance is outright and absolute. So far as I can see, that means that Job has established the right of women to own and hold property.

Could this be part of a legacy that Job has brought back from a very large world to a very small world?

The way was prepared by the names that Job gave to his daughters, and by the slight shift the author gave to our understanding of beauty.

For Job, the beginning was a clashing of worlds. One said "just" while the other cried "unjust." The need for human friendship, and a need of clarity, the two refused to mesh.

Human sociality and all it requires means nothing more than that by day men work together and in the evening they talk. Of what do they speak? Of the way to plant corn, the way to go out on the hunt, the way to bake bread, the way to bury the dead, and of the way to live as "one of us." Without these ways, there would be no corn, there would be no bread, there would be no life. These ways must be taught and they must be learned. They must be taught, some by the fathers and some by the mothers, and it is the children who must learn them. But men are such that the stories that teach these ways cannot be shared unless they touch upon "the first things" and tell of a world which holds all of our ways together. Without a whole, men are empty and life is without taste.

The need for clarity that came about when his world began to fall asunder ultimately led Job to the need for autonomous understanding, and hence to questions concerning those accounts of "the first things."

Out of the whirl of the Tempest came the notion of the signets, the notion that things had their own seal upon them and were what they were in themselves apart from human need. This recognition led to a shift in Job's understanding of and sensitivity to beauty. The needs of man may better be served by being open to the excellence of things as they grow of themselves than by seeing them as being directed towards those needs. This insight, in turn, led, as we have seen, to the emergence of the nurturing and swaddling God as distinguished from the making and constructing God. A small change in a last will and testament was the result.

